

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8188

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, MT, US

SUBJECT: FELICE VISIT

REF: VALLETTA 1104

1. FELICE CAME BY TO SEE US YESTERDAY. HE SAID HE HAD
SEEN MINTOFF EARLIER THIS WEEK AND HAD BEEN SHOWN THE COPY
OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO MINTOFF THAT I HAD DELIVERED
MAY 12. HE FOUND MINTOFF VERY PLEASED WITH THE LETTER,
WITH MINTOFF VOLUNTEERING TO FELICE THAT HE HAD NOT
EXPECTED SUCH A GOOD RESPONSE.

2. IT WAS CLEAR FROM FELICE'S COMMENTS TO US HOWEVER THAT
FELICE (WHO SAID HE WOULD BE SEEING MINTOFF AGAIN BEFORE
LEAVING FOR TWO WEEKS IN EUROPE LATER THIS WEEK) HAD BEEN
ASKED BY MINTOFF TO PROBE WITH US WHAT MIGHT COME NEXT.
WHERE, SAID FELICE TO US, DO WE GO FROM HERE? WOULD IT BE
BEST FOR MINTOFF NOW TO SEND A FOLLOW-UP EMISSARY OR
DELEGATION TO WASHINGTON OR WOULD IT BE BEST TO WORK
THROUGH THE EMBASSY HERE? WHAT COULD MINTOFF EXPECT WITH
RESPECT TO MARSAXLOKK AND, FOR THAT MATTER, WHAT KIND OF
GUIDELINES APPLY TO EXCESS PROPERTY AVAILABILITY AND TO
US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE GENERALLY? HE THOUGHT MINTOFF WAS
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QUITE UNINFORMED AS TO WHAT HE MIGHT EXPECT ALONG THESE
LINES.

3. WE TOLD FELICE WE WERE GLAD THE LETTER WAS SEEN IN A
POSITIVE WAY. I SAID I HAD TOLD MINTOFF THAT I EXPECTED
FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO HIS ORAL APPROACH
REGARDING HELP IN EXCESS EQUIPMENT FOR MARSAXLOKK. I DID

NOT YET HAVE THIS. REGARDING PROCEDURES, THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER SPOKE FOR ITSELF. AS AMBASSADOR TO MALTA I AM HERE AND AVAILABLE AND I WOULD EXPECT TO BE THE NATURAL CHANNEL IN CONTACTS WITH WASHINGTON.

4. REITERATING WHAT WE HAVE DONE BEFORE WITH FELICE, WE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING UNDUE EXPECTATIONS. THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER WAS POSITIVE IN TONE BUT IT DID NOT GO BEYOND REAFFIRMING WHAT OUR POLICY HAS BEEN. MALTA SHOULD NOT LOOK TO US FOR ECONOMIC AID. WE WERE PREPARED TO HELP IN OTHER WAYS, PARTICULARLY IN INVESTMENT. (ON THE LATTER POINT FELICE SAID MINTOFF HAD TOLD HIM HE THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER HAD EXAGGERATED THE PRESENT ROLE OF THE US PRIVATE SECTOR IN MALTA. I SAID MINTOFF HAD NOT SAID THAT TO ME, REMINDING FELICE IN SOME DETAIL WHERE WE STOOD IN THIS AREA.)

5. ON EXCESS PROPERTY, THERE WERE OBVIOUSLY SEVERAL PROBLEMS. IN THE FIRST INSTANCE WE NEEDED TO KNOW MORE SPECIFICALLY WHAT MINTOFF HAD IN MIND. (FELICE SAID HE UNDERSTANDS A LIST IS BEING PREPARED.) THERE WAS ALSO THE PROBLEM OF AVAILABILITY, A VERY DIFFICULT OPERATION IN ITSELF AND ONE THAT WOULD REQUIRE VERY DETAILED AND COOPERATIVE FOLLOW-THROUGH ON THE PART OF THE MALTESE IF AND WHEN WE GET TO THE POINT OF ARRANGEMENTS REGARDING PROCUREMENT. AND THERE WAS ABOVE ALL THE PROBLEM OF MEANS

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OF FINANCING. WE HAD NO PRESENT REASON TO EXPECT THAT THE USG COULD OFFER CONCESSIONAL LENDING, MALTA NOT BEING IN THE KIND OF ECONOMIC SITUATION THAT WOULD NORMALLY QUALIFY IT FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE. HAVING SAID THAT, WE ALSO EMPHASIZED HOWEVER THAT PURCHASE ARRANGEMENTS UNDER THE EPD, ASSUMING THAT SPECIFIC NEEDS WERE IDENTIFIED AND SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT WAS AVAILABLE, COULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO MALTA IN ITS OBJECTIVES FOR MARSAXLOKK.

6. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT'S 126507 GIVING ME INTERIM GUIDANCE ON THE MARSAXLOKK REQUEST HAS JUST ARRIVED TODAY, MAY 19. (I ASSUME OUR 1126 WAS CONSIDERED IN DRAFTING THAT RESPONSE, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS NOT REFERENCED.) DEPARTMENT WILL APPRECIATE WHERE THIS RESPONSE LEAVES ME; I.E. UP THE CREEK. FOR ME TO GO IN WITH WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A TOTALLY NEGATIVE RESPONSE AFTER A MONTH'S CONSIDERATION TO A REQUEST AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL WILL PERHAPS BE A USEFUL EXPERIENCE BUT NOT A VERY PRODUCTIVE ONE IN TERMS OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. I WILL OF COURSE CONTINUE TO INSURE THAT GOM AND MINTOFF ARE AWARE THAT CONCESSIONAL USG ASSISTANCE IS UNLIKELY, AS I DID YESTERDAY VIA FELICE, BUT UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED I INTEND TO

DEFER ASKING TO SEE MINTOFF DIRECTLY AGAIN UNTIL WE HAVE
HIS LIST IN HAND AND WE CAN POINT OUT MORE SPECIFICALLY,
ON GROUNDS OF AVAILABILITY AS WELL AS ASSISTANCE GUIDE-
LINES, THE LACK OF REALITY IN EXPECTATIONS. LAINGEN

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